

6 May 1970

Roffman (cc. Weisberg)

Dear Howard:

Enclosed is copy of Harold's writing on Vallee and Bolden, and the documents that relate to the text.

Write to Sherman Skolnick for a copy of his suit. His address is 9800 South Oglesby Ave., Chicago, Ill., 60617. Send him \$2 for the cost of copying.

If you see news clippings on this matter, please send me copies. I have the beginnings of a file, and have written to Skolnick himself for copies on news. No response on this yet.

When you write to Skolnick, play dumb. Don't indicate disapproval, just curiosity.

399 base: I have your excellent description of the location of the fault that you and Harold call attention to. I was misled by Harold's previous descriptions and referred to an entirely different area.

I will have to study the pictures carefully before rendering a judgment, so presently I won't say anything. For reference, let's use your term "ridge" when referring to this.

In correspondence with Harold I may have mentioned my opinion that the "flake" that was detached probably came from the "ridge" that you designate. I can't recall whether I said this, but do remember that I thought it. The top of the ridge was not sliced or rubbed off, but has characteristics indicating piece was detached by being bent back and forth, or something like that. The ridge is very, very thin, and this could easily happen by accident.

I'll say more later. I wish, though, that I could see Nichols' photo first, but perhaps by that time you will not need another opinion.

133D purchaser: I sent Harold the article. He plans to get in touch with Maynew. Let's see what comes of that.

Neck fragments: I have nothing to add to my previous remarks. However unreasonable it may seem, I still think the description nonsensical. I am amenable to change, not adamant in asserting anything, but the thing makes no sense to me.

6.5 mm frag: As I recall, the largest frag that Humes removed was no more than a few grains in weight. Very tiny. I cannot imagine a frag of 6.5 mm size weighing as little as that unless it were severely flattened. I do not understand how the 6.5 can be the "next largest" (per Sibert-O'Neill) after the one that Humes recovered.

Letter to Wecht: I believe that I sent you a copy recently, but your letter of 2 May indicates that you have not received it. By now you should have. If not, tell me.

Use of handgun: Before I comment extensively on this, you should tell me precisely what firing conditions you wish to imply as a possibility-- especially the range.

close I can tell from your comments that you do not understand how difficult it is to shoot a handgun accurately (I assume, for the moment, that you place the shooter in one of the buildings behind JFK). In talking about accuracy, I am not referring to the inherent accuracy of handguns, but rather the ability to aim well enough to hit what you want to hit. In this regard handguns are exceedingly inaccurate, and cannot be relied upon to deliver a missile to target. Handguns are and always have been useful only for large targets at short ranges. It's difficult to argue this, for many factors are involved, but you should understand that a handgun is most unsuitable for the sort of conditions that I think you imply. Even a scoped handgun is unsuitable. I cannot imagine a potential assassin even contemplating the use of such a firearm unless he intended to get very close to his victim. If you want to assume a handgun was used, you must assume also that it was used by a master pistolero the likes of which I think the world has never known. And if he is a master with a handgun, then he knows better than to use a handgun in that situation. Suppose, for example, you had a superb axe thrower who could reliably sink his axe into any tree within 10 yards distance. This same man anticipates killing a ~~deer~~ running deer at a distance of 50 or more yards. Given the option of using a rifle, which he can use moderately well, or his axe, which he can use expertly, he will select the rifle, because he knows that the capabilities of his axe and his ability to use it are limited to other circumstances than the killing of this deer. He knows his axe well enough to know that it is not useful in the impending situation, no matter how good he is. The situation for Dealey Plaza is comparable. An expert with a handgun knows that a handgun is virtually useless in the situation that he anticipates.

Understand that by virtue of the difficulty of aiming and holding a handgun on a distant target, the handgun is the least desirable shooting instrument by far.

The 1200 ft. per sec. revolver that you mention is probably the .357 Magnum, which in fact sends bullets at a muzzle velocity of 1400 fps. Another hot one is the .44 Magnum, which fires at about 1500, but sends a much heavier bullet than the .357. (The .41 Mag. stands between these, but I think was not developed until after 1963.) Guns chambered for these calibers are of excellent quality, and are inherently capable of very fine accuracy. The problem of accuracy in handguns is in the shooter, not the gun; he cannot aim and hold these things on moving targets over long ranges, and still be reasonably sure of hitting his target. And, as I said, if he knows he is going to be shooting at a distant target, he'll pick a rifle.

The situation you imply is not the sort that I can categorically deny, but the possibility is so remote that I regard it almost unthinkable.

If you must think of JFK being hit on Dealey Plaza by a ^{handgun} bullet fired from ~~anywhere~~ behind, then you must think of short ranges.

I just cannot understand the rationale of using a handgun. It cannot be aimed as accurately as a rifle, and lacks the killing power of a rifle; the objective of an assassin is to put a killing bullet on target, and at long distances a handgun cannot be relied upon to do this.

By the way, the .357 is about 9mm.

John